



Advice for First Aiders during the Coronavirus outbreak 2020

First aid numbers

Information on the requirement for first aid provision is available on the Health and Safety Department web site at:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/health-safety/safety-responsibilities/first-aiders>

In the current situation there may be a reduced number of first aiders available in the workplace. However this will be accompanied by a corresponding reduction in staff numbers generally, so the provision may cover a smaller number of people, but a larger area, and it may well be that the nearest first aid help is on an adjacent floor, or even in an adjacent building – signage or information, such as first aid notices, should be updated to reflect this and all staff onsite should be made aware of this change at the onsite induction. Any review of first aid requirement should be made on the basis of risk, using the information on the web site shown above.

General guidance

Keep the workplace tidy and free of obstacles which could cause a trip or slip. Bad housekeeping is a recognised cause of workplace accidents.

Consideration should be given to prohibiting or reducing high risk work, for example use of high hazard chemicals, pathogens, radiation, or workshop machinery, to reduce the chance of a serious accident.

First aiders are trained to consider their own safety as they approach an incident, and this is very important in the current situation. It is unlikely that proper personal protective equipment (PPE, e.g. gloves, face shield, apron, surgical mask) will be available, particularly in the stressful circumstances of an emergency, so first aiders should apply the principles of social distancing, maintaining two metres between themselves and the casualty. This could work satisfactorily if, for example a person had cut themselves, and the first aider guided them to where the first aid kit is located (or made it available by putting it within their reach), and then advised on how to apply a dressing, the pressure required to stop bleeding, etc.

In a more serious situation, where the injured person required to be put in the recovery position, then the first aider should look to see what PPE is available (ideally gloves and surgical mask as a minimum), and put it on. Once the casualty has been treated they should apply the principles of good hygiene and wash their hands thoroughly.

In a very serious situation, where a casualty required CPR, the first aider would have to make a decision on what to do, given the risks involved, and current guidance is that they should give chest compressions but no rescue breaths, and cover the casualties mouth and nose with a soft cloth covering prior to chest compressions commencing.



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These are very personal decisions, and the first aider may have to accept that in some circumstances the best thing they can do is call for expert help by alerting the emergency services.